423 the land was hereditary property, which had the positive results of continual and steady use of the land and the negative one of constant subdivision of the peasant holdings in the country. The Bolshevik uprising did not bring about any significant improvements in the life of the small holders as sovkhozes and kolkhozes were organized on the large estates. Up until 1930, D. Prishchepov, a former Socialist-Revolutionary, was the head of the National Commissariat of Agriculture. He had managed to live abroad and become acquainted with agricultural conditions in Denmark and Germany. Upon his return to Belorussia he contemplated a series of measures which he considered the more useful since they were in accordance with the desires of the great mass of the Belorussian peasantry. So as to increase the land fund and distribute it among those who had little or none, Prishchepov managed to abolish a part, although an insignificant one, of the Soviet farms and also to bring about significant reductions in the land belonging to these establishments. As the basic unit of land to be used, Prishchepov chose the small village of ten to twenty peasant farms, with comfortable farmsteads of up to one hectare in size. /11/
[311] Even in those times it cost him[1] a great effort to prove the advantage of the small village over the large one as a method of land exploitation. The necessity of rapid reconstruction of the system of land tenure in Belorussia was obvious. In the first place there was the question of what to do with the reserve land which had been given for temporary use to the landless peasants and those with small holdings. Then, it was proposed to apportion crowded and disorganized large villages among small ones. Part of the peasantry wanted small separate farms under the new system, but Prishchepov could not officially establish separate farmsteads. In practice it happened as an exception that, when lands were being distributed in the woods, separate farms were
668 cut out as well as small villages. . . To placate the theoreticians, Prishchepov[1] had to assure them that it was very easy to make the transformation from a small village to an agricultural commune. Prishchepov knew quite well how absurd these assurances were, but being one of the leaders of the national movement he was guided by the interests of the country and not by the presuppositions of the
654 Communists which at the time were both unclear and confused. In addition to increasing agricultural assistance Prishchepov[1] introduced a series of measures designed to encourage improvements on the holdings of independent peasants. Various types of agricultural exibition

[1] [D. Prishchepov, head of the National Commissariat of Agriculture, beginning about 1920 to 1930 - Analyst]

407 outbreak of the German attack, it was estimated that the B.S.S.R had 12,000 tractors, 1,500 combine harvesters, and 20,000 other agricultural machines.

Agricultural Development of Western Byelorussia

241 311 The arable area of the Byelorussian Republic was increased by about 3,597,000 hectares in 1939, when Western Byelorussia was rejoined to the Soviet Union. According to the Concise Statistical Yearbook of Poland, London, 1941, this territory in 1938 had 136,000 hectares under cultivation of wheat, 1,132,000 hectares under rye, 664,000 hectares under oats and barley, 518,000 under potatoes, and 60,000 hectares sown to flax.

241 423 Before the incorporation of the western territory into the B.S.S.R., its agriculture was primitive. Eighty to 90 per cent. of the population were engaged in agricultural work, and there was practically no mechanization. After 1939, however, many changes were made. The People's Assembly of Western Byelorussia declared all land, timber, and water resources to be the property of the state, (that is, public property);; and subsequently, 646,000 hectares of land were distributed among the poorer peasants, as well as 540,000 hectares taken from large estates and given to poor and middle-class farmers and to formerly landless hired men. Fourteen thousand hired men and poor peasants also received horses, and 33,400 households received cows.

474 [475] Many of the farmholdings were then organized into collectives; about 1,000 kolkhozes were formed in a short time, and over 100 machine and tractor stations erected. In 1940 these west Byelorussian M.T.S. had 1,500 tractors at their disposal - about 15 per cent. of all the tractors held by the M.T.S. of the Republic.

[727] The process of collectivization in Western Byelorussia was interrupted by the German occupation, which destroyed the Soviet system of land utilization, and at present the work of reorganization is not moving along very rapidly. By 1946 only about 100 collective farms, combining 2,802 individual holdings, had been reorganized and were again functioning; and this is but a small fraction of the peasant population in the western region. However, government officials state that no immediate pressure is being exerted to promote collective farms.

German Devastation of Agriculture

727 241 The German occupation from June 1941 until the summer of 1944 left Byelorussian agriculture exhausted and devastated. The enemy had destroyed 9,200 villages and more than 1,200,000 peasant holdings. Ninety-two state farms and about 10,000 collective farms had been plundered and destroyed. All the food processing plants had been blown up; and over 316 machine and tractor stations had suffered destruction and looting; from them the Republic lost 8,996 tractors, 1,105 harvester combines, and countless numbers of other agricultural machines which the Germans either wrecked or carried off to Germany.